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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR MARCH 15, 2006

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for March 15, 2005. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

**RADIKAL:** Hanri Leylek, Bishop of Catholic Church in Mersin, made a press announcement together with the spiritual leader of the church, Roberto Ferrari, in Mersin, and said that a man with a knife came to the church on March 11 and attacked them during the rehearsals of a theater play. The assailant reportedly forcibly took the cell phone of the bishop and ran away after making threatening remarks. Mr. Leylek and Deputy Security Director of Mersin confirmed that assailant was caught, his statement would be taken and he (assailant) would be arraigned.

**ZAMAN:** The council of ministers will discuss tomorrow celebrations that will be held on March 21 for Newruz. Authorities from MIT intelligence center, Security Directorate, and Jandarma will take part in this meeting. The daily separately claimed that PKK has been scheming murders to provoke people and it has been devising bomb incidents to exert its influence.

**ZAMAN:** DTP will be holding the celebrations in four major cities of the southeastern province, namely Istanbul, Diyarbakir, Batman and Van. DTP will reportedly recruit a thousand people to mitigate any kind of incitement that may take place during the celebrations.

**ZAMAN:** Police found twenty kilograms of heroin in a car in Van during a search.

**YENI SAFAK:** Ali Urkut, former DEHAP Deputy National Chairperson, has been sentenced to one year and three months in prison on grounds that he conducted an unauthorized gathering (on an unspecified date.)

**YENI SAFAK / CUMHURİYET:** Kurdish groups which are opponents of Syrian regime have held a meeting in the U.S. Senate building to mark the second anniversary of the conflicts that broke out between Kurdish groups and security forces in 2004 in Syria. A map in the hand-outs delivered during the meeting depicted Trabzon, Antalya and Ankara provinces in Turkey as in the territory of "Greater Kurdistan."

**RADIKAL / YENI SAFAK / CUMHURİYET:** Deniz Baykal, CHP national leader, claimed that ratings on the Semdinli Case indictment have broken records in Turkey. Baykal criticized attempts of certain circles that so easily and willingly held guilty Land Forces Commander who "is indeed in the position to serve as the future Chief of Staff in Turkey." Cumhuriyet daily reported remarks of the CHP leader as blaming PM Erdogan and his party for involving themselves in a dark plot against the military.

**CUMHURİYET:** The Semdinli case file, which is comprised of more than 10,000 pages, reportedly included records of telephone conversations among members of the terrorist organization and allegedly revealed that PKK obtained reports created by JITEM (Jandarma Intelligence Center). The report cited two terrorists reportedly sharing intelligence information obtained about them among themselves in a telephone conversation, and exchanging ideas concerning this information.

**YENI SAFAK:** Twenty-three civil society organizations in Van extended support to the Prosecutor Ferhar Sarikaya who prepared the Semdinli case indictment.

**YENI SAFAK:** The government has committed itself to complete last phase of the reforms in the path to the EU access ahead of parliamentary summer recess. Reform Watch Group, which has been led by Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul, has determined major areas of reform that will be subject to legal revision. One of the major areas to be handled will be the relationship of civilians and the military.

**YENI SAFAK / HURRIYET / CUMHURİYET:** Kurds will hold a reception in Ankara on March 23 this year to celebrate Newruz instead of hitting streets and burning tires outside. Kurdish Democracy Forum, which was established in February 1, invited PM Erdogan and political party leaders, and Ankara representatives of Iraqi President Calal Talabani and IKDP leader Massoud Barzani, to the reception. Meanwhile, one of the columnists of Hurriyet criticized DTP Diyarbakir provincial chairperson for sending out

Newruz invitations in Kurdish to Talabani and Barzani and for calling Diyarbakir by its Kurdish "Amed" name in the invitations.

YENI SAFAK: Bingol Governor's Office announced that 84 of the families that applied to benefit from the law that aims to compensate for damage and losses incurred by the people in the eastern and southeastern region have been paid 1,200,000 new Turkish liras to date.

OZGUR GUNDEM: A court of first instance started action in Diyarbakir against the use of a Kurdish name for a women's association called "Pelda."

OZGUR GUNDEM: As Newruz draws near, people in the region started celebrating Newruz by burning tires in the streets. In Sirnak, police reportedly intervened when youth started burning tires and shouting slogans in support for Abdullah Ocalan in some quarters of the district. People in Van burned Newruz fire and youth shouted slogans in support for Ocalan. NGOs in Agri's Dogubeyazit district held a meeting in the DTP provincial headquarters and announced the Newruz program.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Sırnak Governor's Office, which has recently turned down the application documents of the Newruz committees that used Kurdish "w" and "o" letters in the Kurdish word "Newroz", now decided to grant authorization to the applications involving those letters following a second meeting with the Newruz committee. Meanwhile, Newruz celebrations and preparations for it have been continuing in Diyarbakir. Diyarbakir Newruz Committee hung big banners in the streets reading "Newroz piroz be! (Happy Newruz!). There is still Hope for Peace." Meanwhile, Security Directorate in Adana turned down an application submitted by the Newruz Committee for using the letter "w" in the documents. Celebrations in Adana will be held on March 18.

OZGUR GUNDEM: An indictment Diyarbakir Chief Prosecutor prepared concerning the case of Osman Uzan allegedly refers to the Kurdish people as "so-called" people. Charges will be brought against Uzan who allegedly shouted slogans in support of Abdullah Ocalan during a press announcement of TUHAD-FED (Federation Initiative for Solidarity with Inmate Families) in Diyarbakir on January 16, 2006.

OZGUR GUNDEM: According to the daily, police have been implementing heavy security measures in Van following last week's bomb attack. Police reportedly prescribed a car cleaning business to relocate its business elsewhere to provide more security to the area surrounding Governor's Office. The owner of the business claims that the police are obliging them to leave because of their Kurdish origin.

OZGUR GUNDEM: PKK reportedly claimed that during the four-day military operation Turkish Armed Forces launched on March 9 in the Gabar Mountain in Sirnak, 13 soldiers allegedly have died.

CUMHURİYET / RADIKAL / OZGUR GUNDEM: Atilla Kart, Konya deputy from CHP, have brought the case of Kilis Mayor and former deputy Ekrem Cetin and his son Cahit Cetin, who were murdered on June 3, 2005 in Kilis, to the agenda of the Turkish Parliament, and requested a response from the Interior Minister concerning this question. Kart reportedly inquired about the particular question concerning whether Mustafa Demir, who allegedly aided and abetted the killing of the mayor and his son, was an intelligence member or not.

CUMHURİYET / BOLGE: Adana will celebrate today the 84th anniversary of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's visit to the Adana province.  
REID